

Child Passenger Safety

Background. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages 5-14. An average of eight children in that age group are killed and more than 900 are injured in traffic crashes every day.¹ Child safety seats can reduce the risk of death significantly. *Children who ride in safety seats survive three quarters of the crashes that would be fatal otherwise.* All states have laws requiring child passengers to ride in safety seats, but as many as 40 percent of children still ride unprotected. Furthermore, 80 percent of the seats that *are* in use are installed or used incorrectly.

What can employers do for child passenger safety? Make family safety an organizational priority. Use internal communications (newsletters, e-mail, etc.) to educate employees that children who ride unprotected are vulnerable in a crash, or even in a sudden stop or other maneuver. Encourage employees to buy a safety seat for their child (it's the law in every state) and *take the time to learn how to install and use it correctly.* Hold clinics periodically with a trained technician to demonstrate correct usage and provide free safety seats for employees who cannot afford to purchase one.

What key points should we tell our employees?

- The back seat is the safest place for children 12 and under to ride, especially if the vehicle has a passenger-side air bag.
- Never place a *rear-facing infant seat* in the front seat if the vehicle has a passenger-side air bag.
- If an older child must ride in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger-side air bag, move the seat back as far as possible away from the air bag...and use the lap and shoulder belts.
- Make sure the entire family is buckled up...*every trip.* Make it an iron-clad family rule.
- Child safety seats are not always compatible with all vehicles. Check for a good fit before buying. Read the vehicle owner's manual and the instructions for the child safety seat. *It is not always easy to install a child safety seat correctly. Even conscientious parents may have difficulty.* Call NHTSA's toll-free Auto Safety Hotline—1(800) 424-9393—if you need help or more information.

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration